

A decorative illustration on the left side of the book cover. It features a vertical branch with several green leaves and two bright pink flowers. One flower is fully open, showing its center, while the other is partially visible at the bottom. A red and orange butterfly with black markings on its wings is positioned at the bottom left, near the lower flower.

Considerations

An Epiphany Gift
January 06, 2009

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San Francisco, CA

This work is dedicated to the many authors and teachers from whom lessons and inspiration were derived. These authors and teachers ultimately drew from one source: Jesus the Christ, the Teacher sent by the Father, the Author of our Salvation. I pray this text may lead you to discover the wise and holy souls who will provide far more efficacious spiritual fare than you will find herein.

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Introduction

These Considerations are thoughts on various aspects of the spiritual life. They come from a time many years ago and were gatherings from various holy and wise persons. None are my original thoughts.

If I had had the prudence to heed the wisdom that they express and that was lent to me for the while I treasured it, the Good Shepherd would not have had to leave so many faithful souls to seek the lost and foolish stray. Yet I am now in the safety of the Flock. Such is the goodness of our Good Shepherd and Redeemer, such is the loving forgiveness of Our Father in Heaven.

I share these gifts derived from the holy and wise souls in whom the Holy Spirit inspired them that they may be an inspiration in the moment you might need them.

Though the content, in so far as it is correct, belongs to The Faith, the wording is mine, as well as the faults in the manner of expression and paucity of understanding. You are free to share them further, provided no commercial use be made of them.

Thank you for all your kindnesses with which my life has been blessed, and for giving thought to these Considerations.

Marcel B. Matley
San Francisco, CA
Traditional Feast Day of the Epiphany
January 06, 2009

How blessed is the soul that can combine the spirit and idealism of youth with the stability and wisdom of old age. Wisdom without idealism can so easily decay into cynicism. Idealism without wisdom can so easily evaporate into ineffectual enthusiasm. Spirit without stability misses perseverance and ends in frustration, while stability without spirit rots in complacency or stagnates in conservatism of the imperfect.

The beautiful is never so beautiful as when friends appreciate it together, and the good is never so much so as when they aspire to it together. We may be rich in treasures, but our treasures will never enrich us till we share them with others with a prodigality that would seem to impoverish us. My God, I ask of you the grace of friends with whom I might share whatever riches of beauty and goodness you may have entrusted to me.

There are so many good things I intend to accomplish. And I certainly would do each, *if only*! One's good resolves are outnumbered only by one's much better excuses.

A very poor lent indeed. No fasting, no suffering, no dying to self. No discipline of life. And prayer begrudging and halfhearted. Even a tomb must be new and open to receive Christ. And the tomb of my heart? How have I renewed it or opened it to the Spirit's renewal? I have just read in Raissa Maritain's Memoirs the words of Leon Bloy: "We must pray. All else is vain and stupid." How vain and stupid I have been!

An acquaintance is one whose name and face you recognize, and a friend is one whose heart and spirit you recognize.

I tell Christ: "The lavishness of your love frightens me. It compels generosity from me in the face of my smallness." His heart corners my heart, which is too cowardly to take the spear His took. So He must corner me again, for I will not let Him capture my heart though it is His by rights.

I do not find myself except when alone. As today in the mountains.

All is the gift of God who is Love, so that all might give God to us. It is not exactly true to say that we love God alone. For how can we love Love if we have not learned to love what Love has made lovable? And how can we love God without loving what He loves and as He loves?

We cannot love God alone in the sense of loving Him by ourselves; we must love Him in unison with all His lovers, Christ supremely.

We are tempted to say we would do better in serving God if only we had more opportunity and means. Opportunity and means indebt us to His service. If we do so poorly with limited opportunity and means, will we discharge a greater debt with greater merit or merely fall so much the shorter? We kid ourselves. What we need and must pray for is greater love and generosity in the full scope of present tasks and possibilities.

We humans are a peculiar lot. We hunger for love, love unalloyed. We fear unfulfillment as comes of love unloved and loved unloving. Yet we flee God's love and rummage through human loves for one ungodly.

Only when we are completely lonely can we have a perfect longing for God.

We excuse our conscience by blaming the problem and its insolubility on "the other," or "them," or "the system." We must first resolve all our dilemmas in our own conscience, for it is there that God shall finally judge us.

From a letter I never sent to a friend I never had: "My affection for you is not because of any outstanding talent or work or quality that the patently important people possess. I am a bit skeptical as to all such making a person necessarily lovable. Partly because I have a fair share of such myself and know what is in me. Partly because some very so endowed persons I have known have been not too lovable or even downright unlovable. It is simply that you are kind and compassionate.

"God made you what you are. How can I but have the greatest affection for you on such a premise? Yet, the greatest affection is not enough. Only friendship based on a community of Christ's charity can suffice for a Christian heart. 'In sanctos qui sunt in terra ejus, quam admirabilem fecit omnem affectum meum.' (How wonderful has He made my every affection for His holy ones in this world of His.) Even a fine and wonderful affection has its limitations. Time wears it thin; distance makes heavy demands upon its endurance; and the poor loved one is hard put to it to give not disappointment to the expectations of a friend. Even in a romantic friendship affection is often like the champagne, bands and banners that only guarantee the launching of the ship in style.

"The Greeks best showed their ethical genius in their notions of friendship, the greatest social virtue. Aristotle topped them all with his understanding of the nature of marriage in its fullest perfection: a special kind of friendship that bestows a special degree of ethical perfection and happiness. But all that they can tell us of friendship is of value because of the understanding it may give us of that friendship beyond the imagination of the Greeks, or rather beyond that of all unredeemed mankind.

“Who could think that man might be God's friend? True, pagans made their gods the friends of men, even their paramours, and many other not so ethical relationships. But these gods were hardly godly. Aristotle, who had the most spiritual idea of God, rightly said that man cannot be God's friend for there is disparity of nature. He did not count on Christ removing that disparity by renewing man with a share in the Divine Nature. Thus Christ can say: ‘I no longer call you servants (which is the best we could do in relationship with God previously) but friends.’ Being friends of Christ, how much greater can be our friendship one with another in Him, through Him, for Him, with Him!

“To return to affection. How wonderful He has made my affection for His saints, for they are like Him who alone is good (indeed, Goodness) and thus lovable (indeed, Love) and so affection wells up in effortless response.

“But affection is dynamically limited, thus lacks growth and thus cannot fill the heart's full longing for love, the love of perfect friendship. To be friends in Christ is to pool our sadly sinful neediness of Him, His redemption, His Sanctity, His Salvation. A three-person friendship. The soul of it is His Spirit, that friends may be transformed in the likeness of their Friend. The dynamism of it is His charity; the goal, the hope of His eternal friendship; the stuff of it, the mutual hungering and thirsting for the truth and wisdom He offers.”

Some day I may write up a study called: *St. Paul, the Sinner*. The theme will be from *Epistle to the Romans* where St. Paul describes the dilemma of his living death, from which he found deliverance only through the Grace of God in Christ Jesus. The study will end with: “If Paul, the great sinner, became Paul the great saint, there is no excuse why we, the mediocre sinners, should not become at least mediocre saints.”

The human heart can be such a dinky little place. Yet we can find there innumerable nooks and crannies in which to hide from God.

It is not enough that we do good and do it well. We must maintain in the face of difficulties and obstacles. The greatest of these is our own reluctance to do a good or to persevere in it or to do it indiscriminately. With regard to the social virtues this is particularly true. We easily grow tired because we must buck all of society's lack of virtue. We are reluctant because of the miserable poor returns for our investment in virtue. Not to mention that certain personalities make it repulsive to be virtuous towards them. Our only social salvation is to be imbued so thoroughly with the charity and justice of Christ that we shall have a constant and consistent motivation in developing and practicing the social virtues in all circumstances, toward all persons on all occasions.

Someone once quoted Bernanos to the effect: "Lord, grant we be roads over which men may travel to you and then forget." And another from Bishop Walsh of New Mexico: "If men are to use us to mount to God, then we should expect that they step on us." We cannot be satisfied with any the least partial perfection. Like a railroad with 1,000 miles of faultless track but one foot of disrepair, we lead men to destruction when they travel our way to God if we tolerate an all-but-a-little perfection. If we do not urge men to rush on past us to God, we run the danger of slowly slipping away from Him ourselves.

As man is created to serve God, so nature is created to serve man. In his lordship over nature, man finds he is in the image of the Lord. As man is unfulfilled unless filled with the divine presence, so nature is unfulfilled unless filled with the human presence. In His involvement in human nature, Christ became the priest of man-redemption. Through his involvement in all nature, the Christed man becomes the priest of thing-redemption. Both find in their involvement their crucifixion, and in their crucifixion the meat and marrow of their humanly divine and divinely human mission and meaning.

As created man carries forth the image of creating God, so the Christed man carries on the image of the Christing God. Only now, Christ the God is humaned to serve the salvation of man: and man the Christed is divinized to serve the salvation of nature. In each case, the service is consummated by supplying, and more than supplying, the fulfillment the served is in travail for.

The commission in *Genesis*, renewed as the recommission in Christ's salvific work, that mankind rule and redeem the natural universe, is not a license for tyranny over natural things, a preapproval of a rape of the earth for wealth and adventure. We are entrusted with a tending of the garden of the universe, which entails an obligation to return it to its God with its beauty and integrity intact and enhanced, just as we must return to God with our soul's beauty and integrity redemptively restored and intact.

I bought a work of art to find I liked it only among many works I disliked.

Do not be dismayed by the evil you see in others, do not fear the evil they might do to you. It is only your own evil that takes root in your heart that can harm you in truth.

Do not be put off your ideal by the unidealistic reality of the world. Do not give up your own virtue on account of the unvirtuous treatment given you. We too often retaliate against mean, spiteful or hateful people by becoming or acting like them. If you dislike their kind, do not react in kind. The only damage they can ultimately do you is to induce you to become like them.

We lose faith in people because we see what they are. But we must restore our faith in God and in the possibility He has given to all people. That full possibility is none less than Christliness.

More and more the idea of holiness being a social quality strikes me. Only as a truly social person can man dignify his individuality. Only in holiness can man become perfectly or completely social, for his person is united to the Person of Christ, his personality is qualified by the Personality of Christ, his individuality is most perfectly "selfed" by a relationship, commonly shared but uniquely experienced, to the most unique of individuals, Christ. The deeper our union with Christ, the greater our holiness. The more intimately Christly

our union with others in Christ, the more vital is our holiness. The more expressive, in the full spectrum of human expression, of this union to Christ and to the Christed are we through virtue, the more fruitful is our holiness.

It is certainly a danger that we become so wrapped up in God's work that we become out of touch with God. But on the other hand, if we are involved in God, we must be involved in God's work.

Life is much too rich, people are much too valuable, and God is much too good to waste ourselves in being and doing any other way but wholly, humanly, and holily.

Some thoughts from Fr. Dollen: "Only when we empty ourselves, pour ourselves out for others, give generously, sacrifice, do we find love.

"Nature and grace abhor a vacuum. If the outpouring of self is generous, the inpouring of God is His indwelling.

"To be alone with God is to be in touch with a spiritual dynamo. Then, charged with God, we bring Him to the world, to the individual in the world. That is our vocation. It is an unending New Frontier. Divine Romance, indeed! To have is to give.

"The intrinsic, essential joy of being a Christian. The eternal optimist: a Christian."

No matter how many or how bad the mistakes we make, if we learn from them, we must admit wisdom is come by pretty cheaply. Remember, God, unlike men, only condemns us for sin. Even then, His mercy is ready at hand. So let neither your own mistakes nor the judgements of others throw you or slow you.

Solus Amor! Solus Amator! Sis solus Amatus! (The singular Love! The singular Lover! Be You the singularly Loved!)

From a letter I wrote: "The curse of the damned system is that one has not leisure in which to feed his mind, to think and think and think. And to implement that thought. We do many things. 'Busy work,' as Sr. D. says. If superiors were aware that only the works of ideas and love are fully worthy of man! All else must be the fruit of thought and the expression of love, else it is the enslavement of the workers who wrought it."

The Christ did not shed His blood for our rules, regulations and practices. He died for people. The only true value in these rules and ways of life is their ability to help us bring the sacrificial and redemptive love of Christ to bear upon people's lives.

It is greener on the other side of my fence. But then it is mostly weeds over there.

Man's capacity is such that he is empty when filled by any other than God. And when a man is filled with God, his first fulfillment is a greater capacity, that, being even emptier, he may be filled ever more with God.

It is not true to say: "We fall in love." For if it is truly love, we must rise to it and it raises us up.

In today's Gospel, Christ tells us not to be anxious over what we shall eat, or what we should wear. Our Heavenly Father knows well enough our material needs and will take care of us. So how much more should we not be anxious over the temptations and hardships the soul must face. Even now, Our Heavenly Father prepares the graces we shall need tomorrow and the day after.

Even if I still had all my sins unforgiven, I should not fear to die. First, because God's judgements are all just. Second, I have never judged others harshly except when my own ignorance or the false counsel of others made me think that harshness was kindness. My fondest wish is for that unending compassion for others in their weakness and unending mercy for them in their malice, so that my heart may have the assurance of the Heart of Christ: "As the measure whereby you measure to others, so also it shall be measured to you."

We should not fear the aliveness of human life within us nor the growth and force of life's forces within us; only the Life of Christ and the force of His charity must grow commensurately. For how else shall we be able to chastise, control, channel and Christianize human life and human living towards the perfect humanization of ourselves?

Love, to be truly love, must grow to full fruition. We must show forth our love, or it will smother itself. We must grow one with whom we love, or love will wither. But such are the vagaries of human love, fallen, redeemed, but not fully sanctified and only moving towards final salvation, so that we often show love most by not showing it at all, and often we are most wonderfully one with whom we love by being apart.

I have never been so much alive, nor so dead. I have never loved so much and so little. I have never been so tired, nor so ambitious. Is it that new spiritual growth awaits me now that I have added a second companion, Contradiction, to my constant companion, Loneliness?

Love expresses itself in sacrifice, in giving up something we cherish. The greater the love, the greater must be the sacrifice in giving up something or even all of our own selves. Or, even the supreme giving up, something or all of what we humanly cherish and love in the one whom we love. Christ is the most generous and jealous of lovers. Give yourself wholly to Him, and He will give you wholly to everyone who comes along whose love He wishes to win, while He keeps you wholly to Himself. He gives you to others so that they, losing both you and themselves, may find Him. He keeps you to Himself so that you, finding others only for Him, may not lose Him.

I once read in a biography of St. Francis Xavier his saying: "We must be wholly God's, wholly our own, and wholly others." In the spiritual life and in the apostolate, there is no room for bits and pieces, only room for the integrity, the wholeness that we must ever strive for. Integrally, wholly, is how we must strive for it.

Human nature is the soil in which the plants of divine life and virtue are planted, to grow and bear fruit. The richer and more perfect the soil, the more lush and fruitful the plants. The longer and healthier the plants grow, the richer and more perfect they make the soil become. The Divine Gardener plows, fertilizes and waters our human nature according as He can look forward to having a garden of delight and a harvest of plenty.

We may not feel we have improved much over the years, but let us at least honestly recognize how unimproved we really are. That in itself would be no small improvement. If you have done little or nothing to fulfill the potential that is yours, at least freely admit that potential to yourself and to God. Having done that, you have given yourself greater potential and given God great glory.

Some time ago, an artist friend was terribly discouraged over a painting that someone had commissioned. She was ready to burn the painting. I immediately contracted to purchase the work at a nominal price, for she would allow no more. Out of appreciation for her work, I could not see it destroyed. Out of appreciation for her person, I could not let her think herself a failure she is not. The day after I picked up and paid for the work, she called: "Just to say how happy I am to know you."

It is not often one is so blessed by God with a friend who would call simply to thank him for being himself and for "having come into my life." And yet, if you consider it carefully, is there any other sufficient way of expressing your gratitude to a friend, of repaying your indebtedness, of showing your generosity, of increasing your friendship, of being a friend? That my friend should have done that shows how genuine a person and how solid a friend she is.

What began as a rout has been transformed into a retreat. Bless the Lord, for His mercies are unending.

Lord, my house is once more emptied. With confidence and patience, I wait and watch for your coming, whatever be its hour, by day or night. In your good time, at your good pleasure, come visit me with your graces. With your presence take possession of your temple. You alone are God there; you alone are my Lord.

May I never forget the knowledge, may I ever recall the wisdom, may I never fail the grace that have come with these past days.

I have turned to every spring I could to find the waters my soul thirsted for and found them closed or run dry. So I drank only dust. I have turned to many hands to find a healing, and found they become closed fists for fear of touching the open wound of a soul. Hands can only touch and heal a wounded soul by being pierced in crucifixion.

Then I hear the quietly insistent voice of Christ: "Ask me for drink, and I shall give you living waters which will flow within your soul unto life everlasting." And I hear the Spirit's murmur: "Turn to me and you will find healing." Lord, plant me by that water's edge where I shall never wither. Turn me towards you, and I shall be turned and find healing.

Oh Lord, heal the souls I have hurt and water the hearts I have scorched.

A friend and I were coming up a hill on Punta Bonda in Baja California. I remarked: "Why is it that the more you climb, the higher a hill seems to grow?" He said: "If you knew how high it was before you started, you wouldn't have climbed it."

How true! The further I go up my Calvary, the steeper, the higher, the lonelier it grows. But it is not too much to climb if I ask God for the strength to make this one step and leave the many after and the final one in His Providence.

With each effort of my lazy body, I must ask God to strengthen my weak soul.

After Christ and His Blessed Mother, the only kind of saints are repentant and penitent saints. Christ is the Sanctity of all saints. Mary is the prototype of all saints. Mary Magdalen is the prototype of all penitents. In a very special way, I wish to make the two Marys my patronesses.

Each Christian vocation is a call to be crucified. Our particular state in life gives us the general pattern of the crucifixion. But in the context of our own past, our own personality, our own present condition, our own potentialities, we find the unique completion and meaning of our crucifixion, with all the joys and glories of the resurrection to follow.

It is natural enough to be afraid of the Cross. But do not run from it, for that would be to run from the Christ whom the Apostle has preached to us: "Christ, and Him crucified." Our faith is in the crucified Christ, or it is not a

faithful faith. It is this faith that must come alive with charity and bear fruit in good works, conforming us to Christ, and Him crucified.

At the novitiate of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, I read one of the spiritual thoughts they post on the various bulletin boards. One of many of their admirable practices that *nourish as well as demonstrate their remarkable spirit*. It said: "To sin, it is necessary to forget God."

The whole matter is that one must be carefully unmindful of one or more of three truths in order to sin: The truth about God, the truth about oneself, the truth about the person or object of one's sin. Indeed, being actually mindful of the truth about God is necessary for two extremes of sin, the one extreme of the most malice and least weakness and the other extreme of the most weakness and least malice. An example of the former would be that sin against the Holy Spirit for which Christ had special words of condemnation.

The need to see the loveliness, the lovability of the three truths we have mentioned, rather, the beauty and goodness of these truths that compel and command our love, is a need over and above, and, in a way, greater than, the need of being mindful of the same truths. For the truth will show us the sinfulness of sin, but only the joy we have in perceiving the beauty inherent in that truth

and only the love we conceive for the goodness of that truth will overcome the allure sin has for us and the affection we have for it.

If you feel torn apart, deep down within you, you can trust that God is a good farmer who knows that for some plantings He must plow deeply.

Life itself is no problem. It is just that to come alive one must die so dreadfully.

The most realistic man is the idealist. The so-called, self-satisfied realist is the least realistic of men. The realist just has concern for the actual arrangements of his material world. His starting point is acceptance of things the way they are (“we have to be realistic”), thus ignoring his own transcendent purpose and denying to material things their full meaning. The idealist strives to see what things would be in their fulfillment, to understand how that fulfillment could come about, and to know the role man should play in effecting that fulfillment and his own.

Thus the idealist sees things the way they are and the way they shall be and the way they should be. If he is the perfect idealist, he is a Christian idealist who knows Christ to be the way of things as well as the way of man. Because he thus sees the truth of the world as well as the fact of it, because he perceives the potential as well as the actual, because he understands the meaning of even the meanest thing, the Christian idealist is necessarily a man who carries about in his heart his own crucifix and goes about the work of redemption, always through suffering and, when and where possible, through transformation.

The pragmatic man is the most impractical of men. He maintains either the least of purposes or the smallest of purposes.

When God told Adam and Eve to “increase and multiply and dominate the earth,” He meant it not only in the sense of procreation but also in another sense. He meant us to increase as persons, to multiply those human qualities that make man a manful man and woman a womanly woman, to be master of the social and material dispositions of our life that give support to, as well as means of expression and exercise of, our personality, humanity and dignity. All too often, either through base purposes or cowardice or weakness or ignorance, we allow ourselves to be limited and fractured as human persons, letting the world as we find it today be the master of our lives.

As things become important, and people become an imposition. When we have done things, paid debts, built buildings, organized organizations, administered institutions and have nothing important to do, we are out of contact with the people and have forgotten how to be compassionate with them. But Christ shall teach us by giving us His Spirit.

It may be harder to become good, but it is easier to be good. It may be harder to perform the virtuous act, but it is easier to be possessed of virtue.

When we are on the verge of finding all we have given up, we are close to finding all we have sought. For it is in completely losing that we wholly find and in completely giving that we fully receive.

Men fear death, for it is the end of life. Men fear love, for it is the beginning of life. As Francis Thompson said:

“Nothing begins and nothing ends
that is not paid with moan;
for we are born in others’ pain
and perish in our own.”

And the greatness of love is measured by the greatness of life to which it gives birth; and the pain, given as the price, must be equal to the treasure purchased. If we have overcome our fear of death in so far as it is the end of life, which we cherish, we have yet to cease fearing the moaning of death. If we have overcome our fear of love in so far as it is the source of life which challenges us, we have yet to cease fearing the pain of love.

If we would only stop and think, we could never really afford anything extravagant. That is why we must never stop to think when purchasing a gift for someone we love.

Love flowing between two persons is like a river. A small stone thrown into a river is not much, but it causes a turbulence and an obstruction in the flow. Enough small obstacles to a full and free flow of love will make the course of love turbulent or cease altogether.

The first essential in the proper treatment of children is to realize they are as human as adults, only more honestly so. So they must be considered and treated humanly in a sincere and honest manner.

If we love someone, we will think important what is important to, and according as it is important to, the loved one, regardless of the importance or unimportance we, rightly or wrongly, see or fail to see in things. For such would be important to us with the importance we attach to the person we love.

Only in so far as things are humanly oriented are they important, because they are divinely oriented to the human. Humans fulfill their divine orientation as they grow in this divine sense of the human value of things.

God is the one author of the total creation whose intention in creating is His transcendent glory as made intrinsic in the created. Thus there is an organic interrelation throughout the whole of creation. This organic interrelation embraces creation in its totality, in its total space, its total time, and its total individuality.

God crowned humanity king over the universe to rule it benignly. When we destroy the image of divine beauty in things for our avarice or for our

wanton entertainment, we betray the universe and frustrate the salvific grace of Christ for which all creation moans.

We should be like the tree, which ever struggles to grow into the perfect tree, even during its dying. Its growth is to take the dead elements within the earth and make them a living thrust towards heaven. Even in its eldest age, the tree has youth in its finger tips; and in its youngest age, it has maturity in its trunk.

It is certainly providential that the trials I undergo are of such a nature and just in time to make me understanding and compassionate of those who come to me in their trials. If in the struggles of my soul I would recall how the past has proven this and realize how the future will surely repeat it, I should be a better instrument of God's grace.

Spiritual direction is the art of applying the science of ascetical theology to the needs of this or that soul. And the knowledge and understanding of our own spiritual life is a major factor in increasing our mastery of ascetics. Our spiritual success will equip us to direct others successfully. Our spiritual failure will equip us to avoid misdirecting them. The one will give us our strength, the other open us to God's strength. The one will make us prudent in direction, the other force us to rely on the gift of wisdom. The one will give us confidence in ourselves, the other teach us confidence in God. The one will encourage us to all good, the other forewarn us of any evil. The one is the assurance of God's reward, the other of His mercy. The one will bring rest at midday and at night, the other take away complacency in the morning and afternoon. The one will fill us with joy and happiness, the other make us desirous of true joy and happiness.

Like snows in the sun, God's anger melts before the repentance of His people and becomes the refreshing streams of His mercies, the renewing rivers of His blessings.

If each one of us who says, "They are not doing anything," would do what good is at hand, then there would be no cause for anyone to disassociate himself from responsible action on the grounds that no one is doing anything. Similarly, if just those would go along with worthwhile projects who think that they would really like to but that no one else, or not an appreciable number of people, would do likewise, then there would be more than enough hands to do the work.

My aunt told me once that each year her well had to be deepened simply to keep producing a steady volume of water. So it is with the spiritual and intellectual leader. His spiritual study and prayer must deepen simply to maintain a constant level of spiritual and intellectual giving.

We have not really failed, until our nobler desires fade and our sincere efforts falter.

I have learned three principles of surf fishing: Keep your line in the water; do not be more anxious to eat the fish than they are to eat your bait; and you have to give them what they want to eat when and where they are hungry. These are the same three basic principles in winning souls. It is not for nothing that Christ called fishermen to be the first winners of souls.

No matter what the problem facing us in our service of God, we can assure ourselves of this: The Holy Spirit has the solution, if only we give Him a ghost of a chance to work it out in us by being holy ourselves.

Many parents fail to show affection for each other in natural and normal ways in the ordinary course of life. Maybe that explains why their children do not know either how to have affection or what to do with affection. Often, young people are now cold toward each other, now passionate, but lack the even flow of consistently shown affection in which they feel comfortable with each other and by which they feel comfortable with others. Since love that is cold can never construct, and since love that is passionate will ever destroy, there is really not much to choose from unless one can have that affection which perdures with stability and expresses itself consistently and without which love is lost and life is lonely.

In a counselor-counselee relationship, the counselee loses confidence in the counselor who confides in him. Thus he will cease confiding himself and counseling becomes impossible. In a friendship, however, where the most extensive and effective counseling is often found, counsel must be preceded by mutual confidence and mutual confiding; and even then the counsel must be mutual. For friendship is a kind of equality of love in which two persons generously render each other service which never imposes indebtedness but which inspires a gratitude giving rise to greater generosity.

I find I must read these thoughts over now and then. It is surprising how one can forget in a short time the realization to which God's grace led him over a long period. Besides, the thoughts that find expression on certain occasions are later shown to be only steps toward a truth perceived.

A thought from a friend: "Beauty is a bird—a bird that can fly."

A young lady gave me a painting of the crucified Christ, oil on velvet. Great generosity to express gratitude for a small enough favor. God outdoes His promise of a hundred-fold.

When two friends know and understand each other, it takes little enough talking by the one for the other to recognize honestly what is in his own heart.

A good way to be fed up with oneself is to have to eat one's words a little too often.

Dear Lord, how much those near me must suffer that I become the man I should. Because no man can pay the full price of his perfection, God shares out some of the debt to many and much of the debt to some, or even to one.

An understanding of your own problems will help you to a better understanding of the problems of others. But you must be aware of two dangers which closely follow on this. You may be tempted to project, in part or in whole, your outlook on your problems upon your outlook on the problems of others, thus failing to mark the differences. On the other hand, if their problems are not much different from yours, you may not be able to face them any more objectively and truthfully than you can your own.

Law must be the safeguard to life. But in our zeal for law we often stifle life. This would not happen if we would see that love is the source of both life and law and the fullness of the first and the perfection of the second.

When I consider human nature, I see the inescapable fact of its sinfulness. There is but one consideration that is more cogent about human nature than its sinfulness, and that is the grace of Christ through which alone human nature can escape its sinfulness and in which alone it can find its redemption. So when I meet a person, I am aware of two indisputable truths about him: he is a sinner and, as such, is in need of the grace of Christ which I must bring to him.

God offers us His grace freely in Christ Jesus. He offers it to us because, as a sinful people, we are in need of it. Mercy is on account of misery. But the prerequisite of His free gift is our free admission of our sinfulness and need.

With head down and heart intent I trudged up my Calvary. Then I happened to look up and saw beyond the crest of the place of Crucifixion. How beautiful God's heaven was! Then I glanced to the right and to the left. How many others converged on the same Calvary, for there is but one Calvary and one Cross and one Crucifixion and one Crown and they are Christ's. And I looked back over my shoulder on the City of Man. How pitiful and sorrowful were its citizens, some pitiful for they cared not about Calvary and some sorrowful for I had not taken care to lead them there.

Our first and greatest friendship is with God, who befriended us in the Person of His Son become The Son of Man, and who is the author of all friendships in truth, goodness and beauty. We approach new friendships in need, our own and that of our friends. In our faith and trust in our friends we learn faith and trust in ourselves. In recognizing the talents and potentials in them, we are taught to recognize our own. With them we can share achievement, after we have shared idealism, shared plans and labor, shared discouragement and encouragement, shared rough rides and the joys and fun.

We must also recognize our own and their shortcomings. Thus we can have a friendship that is honest and sincere, for it is founded in the truth of ourselves. And it will be a vital and fruitful friendship, if it is a mutual seeking for the truth of Christ. We must acknowledge that there may come the day

when friends once again go their separate ways, though right now they may not relish the idea of ceasing the mutual enrichment they have brought to each other's lives. But if friends part, to remain apart even, their friendship will never recede, for each sees distinctly how his life bears the indelible truth of God who has used each as His instrument.

God has given me a friend, bringing us together in need, but a need of becoming rather than of accomplishing. In this friendship I have seen a way to completion as a person. And it has lent growth to other friendships. There is much I could tell you of this my friend whom God has given me and of what this friendship has meant to me, but I could never express the breadth and depth of it. Besides, the deepest affections of the heart, like its deepest joys and sorrows, are reserved for telling only to one's God, one's self and one's dearest friends. But I pray that God gives you such a friend as this, for I do not know how your life could be livable without one.

No one ever liked any food until he tasted it.

A weed is a flower that is not appreciated.

It is much easier not to try making friends; but it is much harder to live not having them.

If they put you off by saying, "You have no right to ask these questions," tell them, "Quite true. I have a duty to ask the right questions about these things."

The truth will never harm us, so long as we honestly seek it, truly know it, and sincerely apply it.

You ask how I feel that these two should separate. Every human separation I see enters my heart and, in a manner, separates it from itself. But yet I am thankful and grateful to Divine Providence that they shall suffer less, for they may well learn that to live separately is better than to live together in separation.

They are quite concerned over how they can be better organized. Maybe someone will suggest they start off by establishing some sort of organization.

By their fruits you shall know them," unless, of course, you have already judged them by their appearance.

When you love someone deeply and are hurt deeply in love, do not say "damn" or "hell," for love is the closest thing to heaven.

How parents will warn their children against the friendship of those who may harm them. A mother will even warn her child against the father and the father against the mother. But which mother has been kind enough to warn her child against her own love, and which father has been honest enough to warn his child against his?

Our strength is strongest when it is gentlest.

Oh, would that I were so blessed that any lack of encouragement were not a discouragement.

It is the people who are on your side that will stab you in the back. They are the ones who are behind you.

Too often the ideal we set for ourselves is what we are now. Too often our goal is that which we have compromised between our wished for objectives and unwished for challenges. But soon we might come to find that our ideal is to be without ideal and our goal is to compromise.

To shield your soul from sin, you do not have to hide your heart.

Do not seek the treasure of life unless you are ready to accept its burden.

The pain of love is never sterile, but always generative or regenerative.

The heathen makes merry for life is brief; the Christian makes joy for Life is Eternal.

The first effect of gaining confidence is having patience.

In the past I have always accepted the belief that the great poets and artists used nature and its forms to express their human meanings and their inner visions. But now, I see that it is nature and its forms that express for the artist the unexpressed and inexpressible. So he necessarily surrenders his soul to nature's expression; and, in this mystical act, nature surrenders to his unique creativity by lending itself and its forms to the personal expression of his most intimate reality: that human experience—emotional, spiritual, intellectual, volitional, physical, psychical—which heretofore he had withheld unexpressed or found inexpressible.

As the Word through whom all nature is created is the substantial Image of God's Self (the supreme vision of the supreme meaning), and as all nature, human nature par excellence, is the expression of God's Tri-personal and most intimate experience (the supreme expression of the supremely inexpressible), and as God's creative expression is exemplified by His Wisdom and actualized by His Love (the supreme representation of the supremely real), it is inevitable that the supreme moment of Divine Creation be the moment of the supreme human and supremely human creativity of art and poetry. It is because of all this that we can find in art and poetry what the artist found in nature and its forms, and that through art and poetry we can experience our own unique contact with nature and the mystical act the artist experienced.

Art should be based on discipline just as virtue is. But the discipline of craftsmanship is not art any more than moral discipline is virtue. However, each is the necessary foundation. Art must be creative; but originality is not necessarily creativity. One can be creative by doing what has been done a million times, but doing it with an excellence not before achieved, as Michelangelo did in his Pieta, or Rafael in his Sistine Madonna.

Through his art, the artist must be able to communicate with his public without the need of the observer requiring an explanation that will make the work meaningful. Art should have meaning in and of itself and not have to be

explained or stand in need of an apology. Most modern art has no relation to the mainstream of modern life and is meaningless to the mass of mankind, and so it is artless. The makers and purveyors of this modernistic art have escaped the challenges of being artistic by being artful.

Religious art especially should relate to the life, experiences and capacity of the ordinary worshiper, otherwise it cannot relate him and his world to God, which, of course, is the essential function of religious art. That is why I believe one of the greatest schools of art was Flemish art prior to the Renaissance. Its foundation in discipline, its spirit of a soaring yet earthy mysticism, its duality of contemporary life and Eternal Life, its service to God through service to man, its ability to talk to the human community, to give voice to the community of Christ, and to speak the Word of God, all this is what true art must be if it is to find its fullest truthfulness.

All loyalty should be reciprocal. I believe no superior has a right to a personal loyalty he has not given first. If those who head a group or institution do not give the members the loyalty that they expect of the members, their selfishness will greatly harm the whole group.

Love is founded in need, a need of fulfillment. The greatest such need gives grounds for the greatest love.

After you have found what you searched for, you must keep searching for what you have found.

For the most part, we have sinned not because we did what was sinful, but because what we did was sinful. We are sorry most often not so much because we did what was wrong, but because what we did was wrong. This may seem a

matter of quibbling, but I think it is an important key in the psychology of sin and repentance.

For a Litany of Christian Compassion:

Christ, who spoke kindly to the woman taken in adultery and to whom we speak unkindly because you are not good enough for us, make us compassionate.

Christ, who became one of us to befriend us and with whom we are unfriendly because you are different than we are, make us compassionate.

I dislike being idle, but I dislike even more being uselessly busy, as when doing something that is just as well left undone, or supplying that for which allowance must be made so that it can be supplied.

You can never adequately repay someone for love given freely. Only through freely giving such a love yourself can you discharge the indebtedness to love. That is why we can only do justice to Our Tremendous Lover by being ourselves tremendous lovers.

St. Gregory said possessions to a militant Christian are as garments on a wrestler, what the foe grabs to throw us. Possessions must be cast aside, he says: "To have nothing is to wrestle naked." Rather, possessions of the militant (and no one can be entirely dispossessed without being a burden to others and unequipped to fight the good fight) must be as weapons ready to hand. Arm yourself every way you can, for our fight is a no-holds-barred, free-for-all, for-keeps battle. St. Paul says our battle is not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities. What is not the right weapon, like David we put aside as cumbersome armor but keep the weapons we need. If I review my possessions from this principle, I will be a better Christian militant.

On the facing page is a scanned image of an Ethiopian work of art. To the right is pictured the Annunciation when the Angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive a Son whom she would name Jesus because He would save the people from their sins.

When Mary replied, "Be it done to me according to your word," she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and at that moment the Eternal Divine Word, Son of God, became Son of Man in her womb.

To the left is pictured the Crucifixion, what I believe the artist meant to be the moment of death of Jesus the Christ. By His being entombed and by His coming forth from the sealed tomb on the First Day of the week, as He had come forth from the sealed womb of Mary at His Nativity, death was defeated, sin conquered, and Heaven opened to us.

Thus, this little work of art encompasses the full drama of our Redemption. That this modern work of art comes from one of the most ancient Christian communities and that it remains faithful to one of the oldest traditions of Christian iconography assure us that Jesus the Christ is keeping His promise to be with us, His faithful, to the end of the world.

A final word: Due to unexpected obligations arising in late December and early January, this Epiphany Gift was sent late.

